

MARCH 1999

Inside Seven

CALTRANS DISTRICT 7 EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER



Tony Harris



District 7's 1999 Business Plan Working Towards Achieving Our Mission ... Our Vision

DISTRICT 7 MISSION:

Plan, improve, operate and maintain effective intermodal transportation systems.

DISTRICT 7 VISION:

Recognized as the most efficient, innovative, and responsive transportation organization.

For years, Caltrans has been recognized as a world leader in transportation. The agency has - and still does - serve as a training ground for foreign countries, other states and local university engineers interested in freeway construction, seismic retrofit work and traffic management.

In an effort to "stay on top," we must focus on our mission. Like anything worthwhile, there must be a plan. To accomplish this, 10 goals have been identified in this fiscal year.

The first two are key to the success of any good business plan:

- Create an environment which supports a motivated and skilled workforce.
- Enhance safety and improve operations. This goal not only refers to our transportation system, but also involves employee safety and everyday business operations within the district.

The remaining goals are built around the themes of maintainability; commitments; project time; resources; project management; environment; communication; and business reporting systems.

Each division has prepared strategies and actions linked to the district's goals. To achieve these, five important areas have been identified: Training; employee expectations; roles and responsibilities; employee recognition; and customer support/service. Performance measures will help us evaluate our progress.

Recently, I asked each division chief to prepare a progress report on the status of completing the Business Plan's strategies and objectives for 98/99. Following are some highlights from the divisions:

Construction

Establish a Training Program. Mandatory training seminars were established last July. This involved Construction Office Engineering; Field Materials Testing Requirement and Documentation Procedures; and Asphalt and Concrete Pavement and Electrical Inspections. All have been completed.

Develop an Employee Recognition Process - Construction Personal Service Dollars were designated to fund the employee Sustained Superior Accomplishment Award program.

Complete Programmed Projects on Schedule, within Budget and with Quality - CPM training sessions for Construction and Design engineers were scheduled in November/December and this January. A total of 48 Construction R.E./Seniors plus 48 Design Engineers/Seniors will be trained on using CPM scheduling tools to develop working days, and to detect contractor CPM schedule deficiencies.

Design

Establish Training Programs. Employee skills are being



The Equal Opportunity office (EO) under Governmental Affairs is updating its function to ensure that the system is user-friendly. The district's policy and goals are to provide a work environment that is safe and free from harassment and discrimination. This is commonly referred to as zero-tolerance. "Resolving discrimination issues at the lowest level possible in a quick, efficient and effective manner is the highest priority of the office. This is accomplished through the Informal Discrimination Complaint process and the Equal Opportunity Counseling program," said Irene Coyazo, Office Chief.

Cathi McMahan, EO officer said, "Another top priority of the district is training. Over the next several months, all employees will be scheduled for Sexual Harassment and Diversity sessions. In addition, supervisors and leadworkers will also get to participate in EO Awareness training. These sessions are aimed at providing employees with information about their rights, as well as demonstrating that equality in the workplace will increase quality and teamwork."

One of the key partners of the EO office is the Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) which serves in an advisory capacity. The purpose of DAC is to actively address disability employment issues and make recommendations concerning department policy, programs and practices affecting disabled persons. Another critical function is to promote education and training to increase sensitivity and awareness of issues facing the disabled. Seyed Torabzadeh of Traffic Operations is the chairperson of this committee.

The EO Corner by Cathi McMahan will be featured monthly in Inside 7. Cathi recently came to Caltrans via the State Compensation Insurance Fund where she was employed as a Senior Worker's



Cathi McMahan

Compensation Claims Adjuster. She brings with her a wealth of knowledge regarding equal opportunity issues. These include worker's compensation law and reasonable accommodation. Cathi said she is looking forward to rejuvenating the district EO office and creating a welcoming environment for all employees.

Everyone is encouraged to check-out the EO office bulletin board located outside the Cafeteria. Scheduled events, training information and current equal opportunity policies and procedures are posted. Watch for announcements in March detailing "Bring a Child to Work" April 28.

The EO office is on the Fifth Floor in Rooms 500-B and 500-C. For questions or additional information, please contact Irene Coyazo at 7-0797 or Cathi McMahan at 7-0597.

Tony Harris Returns To Sacramento

Caltrans Director José Medina appointed District 7 Director Tony V. Harris to the position of Acting Chief Deputy Director. Tony assumed his new role February 5, and is currently dividing his time between the district and Corporate.

The director said, "Mr. Harris has an exemplary record of engineering and management accomplishments. He was at the forefront of revamping Caltrans' project management process in 1996, and managed a record \$1.6 billion in transportation improvement contracts awarded for construction.

"Tony Harris has provided excellent leadership in building partnerships among various levels of government and the private sector. As a result, he has enhanced the mission of Caltrans on a local, statewide and national level."

During a recent meeting in the district, Tony assured staff they would see a lot of him as he will be down frequently on department business. He said, "My new assignment is the direct result of the efforts put forth by District 7 employees. The sense of teamwork, initiative and customer service has enabled us to become true partners with all elements of the community we serve. I want to especially commend employees for their willingness to meet with elected officials and private citizens. This has not only allowed us to participate with them in identifying mutual problems, but together - we have an opportunity to implement solutions. My goal is to make sure that efforts like these continue in the district and expand throughout the department."

Tony assumed the position of District 7 Director on May 1, 1997. A month later, he oversaw the first groundbreaking of Route 30 in La Verne, and shortly after, participated at the grand opening of the I-110 Transitway HOV structure in downtown Los Angeles.

During his distinguished career in the district, he unveiled the new Traffic Management Center to our transportation

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assessed. Courses are being identified that are readily available and which can be utilized immediately. All new employees will be assessed within their 30-day start time. On-the-job training modules have been updated to the metric system, and training is expected to be underway shortly or by the time this goes to print.

Rotation of staff - A number of employees have been able to rotate through the normal process of advertising positions.

Better Communication - The Division has gathered basic data to create an Internet Page, and has recently hired a new engineer with experience in web page development. Also, produced a good basic locally funded oversight package for our transportation partners. Next on the agenda is to go out to our partners and give presentations.

Define Roles and Responsibilities in Utilities - Recently, a major reorganizational meeting with R/W was held to define roles and responsibilities. A plan has been developed to bring the district more in line with the way other district's function within the southern R/W region.

Planning and Public Transportation

Establish and Publish Employee Expectations. A copy of the District Director's memo on Employee Expectations was distributed to all employees and discussed in staff meetings. This included work expectations in terms of business plan deliverable objectives, production units and schedule.

Identify and Evaluate Key Problem Areas - Each office chief has examined the work environment of employees as it relates to safety, space and equipment needs. Problem areas were identified, and where possible, corrections were made. In some cases, equipment and partitions were ordered as needed. Longer-range solutions are also being considered.

Develop Training Plans - The Division has been participating in the statewide Planning Staff Development Program to develop and coordinate specialized planner training and rotation programs. A "Planning Academy" similar in concept to the Operations and Right of Way academies is also in the development stage.

Improve Employee Recognition - The department's guidelines on "The Art of Recognition" was distributed to all supervisors. An attitude of recognizing employee accomplishments has been instilled in supervisors. There has been a noticeable increase in awards for individuals and teams. At staff and division meetings, time has been set aside for recognizing employee accomplishments. Also, a portion of the operating expense budget has been earmarked for Sustained Superior Accomplishment Awards.

Develop Project Initiation Document Delivery Plan (PID) - A work plan and database was developed. PID's have been incorporated into the Geographical Information System (GIS). Quarterly meetings are held to revise the PID delivery plan.

Maintain Effective Value Analysis Program - An annual work plan and schedule for delivery of regional VA studies have been developed, and work is proceeding on schedule. The plan calls

for delivery of one study per month.

Develop a GIS Work Plan - In conjunction with Corporate and the district technical advisory committee, a GIS work plan has been developed, and applications are being implemented. Through the first quarter, applications developed or implemented include soundwalls, PID and As-Built plans; and an aerial digital photography project.

External Affairs

Improve Response to all Calls. The Division recognized that a more efficient method needed to be established for providing timely information back to inquirers. In this regard, a number of meetings occurred among Traffic, Graphics and Media/Public Affairs in an attempt to develop a process which would permit electronic dissemination of information. Traffic and Graphics are working to get Planned Lane Closures listed and published electronically. Challenges include linking the information to a map and forwarding it to the media, and the ability to provide information via the Internet. Currently, closure information is only listed on the Intranet. Additionally, Public Affairs has requested that district offices provide information about their projects so a database can be developed for quick access.

Improve the Transfer of Electronic Information to our Customers and Elected Officials - Since the establishment of the Business Plan, various units have created electronic databases which further assist in providing information. The Division has secured a fax server to better enable electronic and selective transmittals.

In an effort to communicate electronically, External Affairs has been actively publishing various documents to the district's website. This includes the District Director's Employee Expectations; Business Plan; High Occupancy Vehicle Lanes (HOV); Executive Summary Report; press releases; and letters of appreciation for employee work. The Division also responds to concerns and issues raised via the Internet. For the month of November, the district received approximately 4,000 hits to its website.

Program/Project Management

Implement Project Management Training. During the first quarter, 20-percent of the planned actions were accomplished. This includes training APM's on Project Management tools; establishing training accounts for all new hires; adding 11 more P3 licenses; and conducting one "Roadshow" during this period.

Develop PID Delivery Plan - Planned actions accomplished: 100-percent! This includes the development of the PID list with updates, and conducting quarterly Program Advisory Council meetings.

Define and Clarify PM Roles and Responsibilities - Planned actions accomplished: 75-percent which includes on-going Caltrans Quality team efforts. Even though the Quality efforts have been hampered by heavy workload commitments, the goal is to have all planned actions continue on through to the fourth quarter.

Improve Customer Support/Service - Planned actions

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attained: 90-percent. These include fostering meetings with local agencies; standing meetings with functional counterparts via PMI, PDT and Horizon forums; timely responses to external inquiries; and increased involvement with VCTC/MTA, County and City of L.A., etc. In addition, a Project Management Home Page was added to the Caltrans Intranet.

Delivery Objectives - Planned actions achieved: 100-percent! These include development of the district's Prioritized Project List; execution of MOU's with ESC and Right of Way; and completed work plans for all programmed projects.

Resource Management

Develop District Training Plan. The District Training Coordinator, working with Division Training Coordinators, has established a questionnaire which will be distributed soon to employees.

Improve Help Desk System and Procedures - The Division has completed a Value Analysis study which included issuing instructions to Lotus Notes users on how to better access Notes. A Quality team was formed and will be presenting their Charter to the Steering Committee shortly.

Develop Guidelines to Dispose of Records - Division Records Management coordinators have been identified and will begin working with the District Record's Management officer.

Ensure Year 2000 Compliance - Computer equipment, which fully complies with Y2K requirements, has been marked with a Green Dot. Computer equipment that partially meets requirements has been marked with an Orange Dot. This means that in many cases, the hardware complies, but the software does not. The district has met all Corporate requirements.

Maintenance

Develop Process to Review Recurrent Problems and Implement Corrective Actions. Maintenance office engineers and field personnel have developed a list of areas that experience recurrent problems. These engineers are working with Corporate liaisons to quantify and prioritize the identified areas.

Provide Training to Meet Skill Levels - Maintenance is providing computer training for Microsoft Word and Excel to field office staff. A "Better Business Letter Writing" class is being developed. Field supervisors and area superintendents attended the Chip Seal Association meeting in San Bernardino. Regions have also begun weekend off-hour training on equipment.

Recognize and Reward Accomplishments - Ten Sustained Superior Accomplishment Awards have been presented and three others are pending. Twenty-eight employees were recognized for their contribution to the El Nino restoration efforts.

Develop Expenditure Tracking Process - In order to better account for allocated resources, the Division has created and filled a budget position at the Staff Services Manager I level. This employee is currently working with Corporate Maintenance budget liaisons and field office staff to accurately account for maintenance resources. The district is working closely with Corporate staff on the development of a new Integrated

Maintenance Management System.

Improve Public Awareness and Perception - The Division has provided employees as guest speakers to various organizations. Also, funded and staffed the Los Angeles County Fair. All of our Adopt-A-Highway permits are now current and up to date. Customer satisfaction has improved due to prompt and courteous service.

Implement GIS - The GIS engineer has completed or is in the process of completing the following: List of all facilities and responsibilities by regions, superintendents and supervisors. List of all communication mountain tops, base stations and pump houses. Web pages have been completed for Maintenance support and Adopt-A-Highway. The 10-year SHOPP-Preventive Maintenance and Preservation Plan has been completed.

Operations

Reduce Backlog of Speed Zone Survey. During the first quarter, 30-percent of the task was completed. The main focus this year is to eliminate the backlog and effectively keep up with making sure all SZS are current. The Division is on target towards eliminating the backlog as well as meeting the current year's SZS workload. Recognition was received via two Quality awards from the department and AASHTO for efforts to eliminate the SZS backlog and creating a more efficient process.

Improve Traffic Safety in the District - The goal is to reduce the overall accident rate in the district by actively identifying and correcting any safety related concerns or issues. In addition, there is an effort to reduce the Table C backlog (high accident concentration) and implement any corrective improvements via work orders in Maintenance. This year, the Division is also committed to conducting a safety review on all capital outlay projects; that means one prior to PS&E and the other at the closeout of the construction contract.

Provide Training to Staff - Seventeen in-house training classes were held. The average class size was 30. Classes included Table C Investigations; Correspondence Writing; New Engineer Orientation; Freeway/Highway Surveillance; Signal Warrants; Signing; Lotus Notes; Fundamentals of Traffic Engineering; PSR/PR Cooperative Agreements; and Fact Sheet Writing.

I am pleased with the progress the district has made thus far. Everyone seems to be working hard towards achieving the district's Mission and Vision. As with everything, there is always room for improvement. The Business Plan is in motion. However Strategies must be implemented to the fullest in order to receive maximum benefits. All employees must understand the Business Plan so our goals can be successfully executed. I want to encourage all employees who may have suggestions for improvements to please notify their supervisor or Division Chief. That's what this is all about. Each one of us doing our part via communication and teamwork to make District 7 the Best! Throughout the year we will continue to assess our progress. Hopefully, as the year goes on, we will be that much closer to our goal of being recognized as the most efficient, innovative and responsive transportation organization serving the needs of all Californians and visitor's to our state. I know I can count on each of you to join me in this exciting challenge!

Popular Maintenance Worker Fatally Injured In Solo Accident

by Jeanne Bonfilio



Paul Chavez, a Caltrans Maintenance Worker with Special Crews in Commerce, was fatally injured in a traffic accident on January 19, 1999. The 40-year-old worker had just begun his career at Caltrans some nine months ago. As of this writing, the single vehicle accident investigation is pending.

What is known is that just after midnight, as he was enroute to the Commerce Maintenance yard, he lost control of his state vehicle while driving westbound on I-210 in Irwindale. For some reason, he went off the roadway and overturned in a ditch. Chavez was pronounced dead at the scene.

Prior to the accident, Chavez was part of a mudjacking operation (where a mud-type material is injected under concrete slabs in order to raise them) on the 210/30 Interchange.

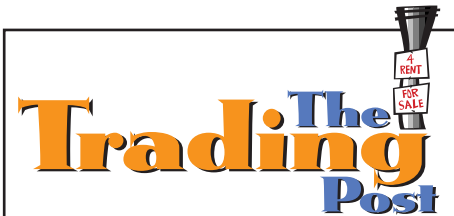
John Hogan, Maintenance Area Superintendent, said, "The more everyone got to know Paul, the more everyone liked him. He was a really nice person, and he will be missed by all."

The death of Paul Chavez raises the

number of Caltrans employees to 150 who have been killed on the job since 1924. According to Robert Conners, Headquarters Public Affairs Officer, one of the biggest hazards is from motorists who do not exercise caution while driving where highway workers are present. Each April, Caltrans observes Worker's Memorial Day to honor those employees who have died in the line of duty. Their names are memorialized on a plaque in the lobby of the Caltrans Headquarters building in Sacramento.

A funeral mass was held Wednesday, January 27 at St. Benedict's Church in Montebello. Gravesite services were held at Calvary Cemetery in Los Angeles.

Paul is survived by his father, Pablo Chavez; two brothers, Richard and Francisco Chavez; two sisters, Alma Rosa Flores and Anna Maria Chavez; 13 nieces



Attention to employees:

Beginning in the April issue of Inside Seven look for *THE TRADING POST*. This section will feature what you may wish to sell, give away, trade, rent, etc.

Send your items for THE TRADING POST to Jeanne Bonfilio by the 10th of each month via e-mail.

If you have any questions, please contact Jeanne at 7-3630.

and nephews; and one great niece.

Caltrans sends it deepest condolences to the Chavez family.



Front row from left: Peter Hsu, Bill Reagan, Wayne Ballantine and Doug Failing.
Back row from left: Karen Fong, Dennis Charles, Peter Fung and Vince Rios.

1998 Season's Greetings Gift Box

District 7 staff donated hundreds of dollars worth of goods to help our nearby neighbors.

• • • RETIREMENTS • • •



Jean Amster Retires After 43 Years

by Rick Holland

Yes its true! After 43 years with Caltrans, Jean Amster has retired. Amster started with the former Division of Highways in June 1955. His first assignment was in Surveys. Shortly after that, he was drafted into the Army where he served a two-year tour of duty. He returned to Caltrans in November 1958.

During his career at Caltrans, Amster worked on a number of significant projects including the Ventura Freeway, Hollywood Freeway, Golden State Freeway and the San Bernardino Freeway. Amster was promoted to Associate Transportation Engineer in April, 1985 where he was assigned to manage the TASAS unit in Traffic Operations. Amster was a real character. His resounding laughter could often be heard throughout the building. Amster's sense of humor will definitely be missed.



Barbara Johnson Says So Long

by Rick Holland

Barbara Johnson has retired from Caltrans after 34 years of service in Reprographics. She started with the Department in October, 1964 as a Duplicating Machine Operator Trainee in that section. Lola Johnson of Reprographics (not related) said, "Barbara was the best. She was thoughtful, considerate and very funny. She always thought about other people. I'll always remember her smile. She was the best supervisor I ever had."

Johnson took various tests along the way promoting to Sr. Printing Trade Specialist. She said, "the most challenging time of my career was during the building of the 105 Freeway. There were a lot of deadlines then, but our crew responded to the pressure and met every single deadline."

Johnson lives in Inglewood with her husband Cortez. She has one son Cory Neal Johnson, two grandsons and a lovely daughter-in-law. Her retirement plans include bike-riding, shopping, lunch with



Alex Benum Calls its Quits

by Rick Holland

After 40 years of service, Alex Benum has called it quits. Alex graduated from Michigan College of Mining and Technology (now called Michigan Technology University) in 1958 with a B.S. in Civil Engineering. Immediately following graduation, he started his career with Caltrans (then the Division of Highways) in District 5 as a Junior Civil Engineer.

In 1960, Benum transferred to the Traffic Department in District 7. He worked in a number of other departments including Design, Programs and Budgets, Hydraulics and Construction. Benum was Resident Engineer on the Pasadena 210/710 project (this project was the largest dollar value freeway contract awarded to the state at that time).

In 1975, Benum left Caltrans for a position as City Engineer/Director of Public Works with the City of Compton. However, the City of Lakewood claimed Benum from 1976-78 as Director of Public Works. He left Lakewood in 1978

Johnson

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friends and taking care of her grandkids. Her advice to all those who have many years left to retire, "Just keep on working, and one day you'll get to experience the joys of retirement." Thanks Barbara - for all the help you've given the district over the course of your career. Your consideration was very much appreciated.

Beanum

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and started his own engineering firm (AHB & Associates).

In April 1978, Beanum was elected to the city council in the City of Cerritos. It was during his first term on the council when he had an automobile accident while attending a city function in Palm Springs. This accident left him paralyzed from the chest down. Following rehabilitation, he was determined to continue his career in civil engineering and politics. He went on to serve as Mayor of Cerritos from 1981-82. After that, he was reelected to the city council for another four-year term. He was the first Black to serve Cerritos as Councilman and later Mayor. During Beanum's tenure on the city council, Cerritos was considered "the fastest growing city in Los Angeles County."

In 1992, he closed his engineering firm and returned to Caltrans in March of that year as an Associate Transportation Engineer in Construction. Shortly thereafter, Beanum was promoted to Senior Transportation Engineer and became Chief of Traffic Management, where he remained until he retired this past December.

Beanum and his wife Victoria, have two grown children, John and Felicia. The Beanum's plan on enjoying their retirement in Cerritos where they have lived since 1970. District 7 extends its best wishes to Alex and Victoria for a very long and happy retirement.

New "Food Court" Debuts At The District Cafeteria

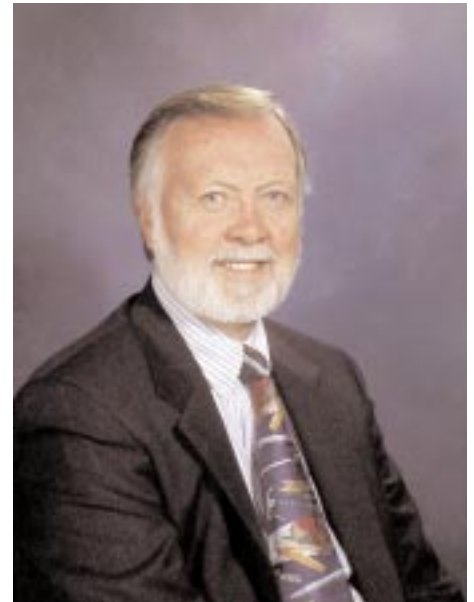
by Jeanne Bonfilio

Peter Milutinovich, Caltrans Cafeteria Manager, wants everyone to know that he and his staff are making every effort to offer Caltrans employees the best service, the highest quality dishes, and the most value for their food dollar. In doing so, he recently initiated a new "food court" concept in mid-January, offering a daily variety of food "stations."

Included in the concept are a Mexican food station, a rice bowl station and a deli station. Peter said, "The deli station will offer freshly-made sandwiches of your choice, including almost anything you would find at a restaurant deli." Some deli sandwich choices include turkey, pastrami, corned beef and chicken salad. Other tasty entrees can be found at Manny's Table, which offers hot dishes made fresh daily, and Joel's Grill, featuring daily breakfast and grilled lunch specials. As always, a daily soup selection and salad bar are available.

Also added to the menu are large, hot, baked potatoes with a choice of toppings located near the salad bar, as well as fried chicken and self-serve spaghetti with two sauces. A concept in the near future will include sandwich "wraps."

Peter said, "The management and staff of the Cafeteria appreciate Caltrans' business, and will make every effort to ensure satisfaction." Peter welcomes any comments or suggestions, and can be reached at (213) 680-0663.



Interim District Director, Bob Sassaman

Harris Returns To Sacramento

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partners, elected officials and the media. Special guest and speaker at the event was U.S. Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater. During and after the occasion, he was interviewed by ABC's Good Morning America, the Discovery Channel as well as virtually every major television station and newspaper in Los Angeles.

As District 7 Director, he managed a freeway and highway network spanning two-counties. His responsibilities took him into the areas of every community and city along the above corridors, transportation and like agencies, business affiliates, and to the offices of local elected officials.

Robert W. (Bob) Sassaman, current Chief Deputy of District 7 is serving as Interim District Director at this time.

District 7 staff extends their congratulations to Tony on entering another interesting chapter of his career. In the meantime, District 7 staff is putting out the welcome mat to Bob who served twice before in this position.

Cultural Cuisine



EASY LINGUINE AND CLAMS

3 cans Gorton's minced (not chopped) clams
(DO NOT DRAIN)
2 bunches parsley, chopped
6 cloves (or more) garlic, minced
6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon corn starch for thickening
2 cups water or clam juice
Pinch of salt
Grated Parmesan or Romano cheese
1 box Barilla linguine

In large sauce pan, over low-medium heat:
Sauté garlic in olive oil until translucent. (DO NOT BURN)
Dissolve corn starch in the two cups of water or clam juice. Add to garlic and olive oil. Add clams. Add parsley.
Simmer over low-medium heat about twenty minutes. For a thicker sauce, add more corn starch.
Cook linguine according to package directions. Serve sauce over linguine. Top with Parmesan or Romano cheese.
Serves Four

GREAT GARLIC BREAD

Take equal parts butter and extra virgin olive oil.
Melt slowly in pan or microwave.
Add pinch of salt, Italian seasoning, oregano and parmesan or romano cheese to make paste.
Add 6 cloves fresh garlic, crushed.
Add Lawry's garlic powder to taste.

Spread on high quality sour dough or Italian bread. Broil bread until golden brown.

Attention to employees:

Each month, a recipe from our readers will be featured in the new *CULTURAL CUISINE CORNER*. Send recipes you would like to share to Jeanne Bonfilio, via e-mail. A new recipe will be featured each month. If you would like to share any other information with readers about your culture, with your recipe, please send it along. Next month is Easter. Do you have any traditional favorites?

This month's Italian recipe is shared by Jeanne Bonfilio.

NOTICE

An electronic version of Inside Seven will be sent to all employees via e-mail and can also be accessed on the District 7 Internet page at:

www.dot.ca.gov/dist07/inside_seven/

For comments regarding distribution, please contact Inside Seven's new editor Jeanne Bonfilio at 7-3630.



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March	Figueroa St. Historic Lights Media Event
April	Arroyo Seco Bridge Seismic Retrofit Completion
April 16 & 17	City of Los Angeles 1999 Emergency Preparedness Fair